

Human Reliability and the Cost of Doing Business

Most businesses recognize that people will make mistakes and assume errors are just part of the cost of doing business, but does it need to be? Companies with high risk, or major consequences, should consider the effect of human error. In a variety of industries, Human Errors have caused costly failures and workplace injuries. These have included: airline mishaps, medical malpractice, administration of medication and major oil spills have all been blamed on human error. A technique to mitigate or even eliminate some of these costly human errors is the use of Human Reliability Analysis (HRA).

Various methodologies are available to perform Human Reliability Assessments that range from identifying the most likely areas for concern to detailed assessments with human error failure probabilities calculated. Which methodology to use would be based on a variety of factors that would include: 1) how people react and act in different industries, and differing expectations based on industries standards, 2) factors that influence how the human errors could occur such as tasks, tools, environment, workplace, support, training and procedure, 3) type and availability of data and 4) how the industry views risk & reliability influences (types of emergencies, contingencies and routine tasks versus cost based concerns). The Human Reliability Assessments should be the first step to reduce, mitigate or eliminate the costly mistakes or catastrophic failures.

Using Human Reliability techniques to identify and classify human error risks allows a company more opportunities to mitigate or eliminate these risks and prevent costly failures.